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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 ASMARA 000253

SIPDIS

DEPT FOR AF/E
LONDON AND PARIS FOR AFRICA WATCHERS

E.O. 12958: DECL: 05/08/2018
TAGS: PREL PINR SU ER
SUBJECT: NEW GSE MACHINATIONS WITH DARFUR OPPOSITION

REF: ASMARA 247

Classified By: Ambassador Ronald K. McMullen for reason 1.4 (d).

¶1. (C) Summary. Eritrea is seeking to create a "new generation of opposition" in Darfur, according to an Asmara-based Egyptian diplomat. His assertion was supported by a Sudanese Embassy officer in a subsequent meeting, who viewed the latest GSE initiative with indifference. End Summary.

ERITREA WILL CREATE NEW DARFUR OPPOSITION, PFDJ ADVISOR STATES

¶2. (C) On May 2, Egyptian Political Chief Hassam Abdallah Nooreldin (Hassam) briefed DCM on a meeting several days prior between a visiting Egyptian delegation and Abdella Jabir, Head of Organizational Affairs for the People's Front for Democracy and Justice (PFDJ), Eritrea's ruling (and sole) political party. Abdulla told the delegation that the Government of the State of Eritrea (GSE) plans to form a "new generation of opposition" in Darfur, and pitched the Egyptians to assist (a request they declined, Hassam noted). According to Abdulla, the Eritreans are pursuing two tracks in this initiative. First, they plan to build a following for a Mr. Ahmed Yusuf, an influential member of the Fur tribe residing in the Jebel Mara area. (Note: Hassam stated that this gentleman has no affiliation with any of the current Darfur political and military players, e.g., SLM or JEM factions. End Note.) The Eritreans would secondly focus on creating a Darfur student movement, particularly among former followers of Abdulwahid Nur, headed by a prominent female student leader from the Fur tribe. Hassam told DCM that he had relayed this information on May 1 to Sudanese Embassy officer Hussein Mohammed Hussein (Hussein), who responded that the Sudanese Embassy already knew about GSE efforts with the students, as the female student leader was currently in Asmara as a guest of the GSE.

SO WHAT, SAYS SUDANESE EMBASSY

¶3. (C) In a subsequent conversation, Sudanese Embassy officer Hussein told DCM that he had spoken with Abdella Jabir about the GSE's newest plans for Darfur. Abdulla had told Hussein that the GSE was seeking to

create a strong united Darfur organization to negotiate with the Sudanese government. Hussein said he had informed Abdella that the Eritreans were more likely to splinter further the Darfur groups. When asked by DCM about the Sudanese government's reaction, Hussein indifferently commented that there was no unity or leadership among the Darfur groups now, and he did not believe the Eritreans would be successful in their latest endeavor. He also implied that Abdella Jabir was personally pushing this initiative, which was not necessarily in complete accordance with the views of PFDJ Political Chief Yemane Ghebreab, the GSE's other key Sudan negotiator. The GSE, Hussein continued, clearly wished to maintain their influence in Darfur, and having lost their pull with the current group of Darfur leaders, was seeking to create a new organization under its sponsorship. Hussein added that the Sudanese Embassy expected to receive a fax this week from a group of nine individuals in Darfur who the GSE planned to invite to Asmara in the near future to initiate discussions.

¶4. (C) COMMENT: This latest PFDJ initiative will represent Round 3 in its efforts to create a client political organization to influence outcomes in Darfur - following the first failed attempt in fall 2006 with the National Redemption Front (NRF) initiative (which included Abdulwahid Nur and Khalil Ibrahim), and the second in spring 2007 with the quickly defunct umbrella group, the United Front for Liberation and Development (UFLD). Despite their first two failures, the GSE still seems

ASMARA 00000253 002 OF 002

to hold the opinion that they can develop a winning client for themselves in Darfur, an opinion clearly not shared by our Egyptian and Sudanese colleagues in Asmara. This initiative comes at a time when the GSE may be losing its grasp on another would-be client/ally to further its regional ambitions, the Alliance for the Re-Liberation for Somalia (ARS). End Comment.

MCMULLEN